MARVEL

6

LGY#422

STRANGE

Wong Clea STRANGE Bats THE DOG

"the Big Spell"

Jed MacKay Lee Garbett

Java Tartaglia VC's Cory Petit

STRANGE

PREVIOUSLY...

Doctor Stephen Strange is dead and the new Sorcerer Supreme is his wife, Clea Strange!

Since taking on the mantle, Clea and her partner, Wong, have had to contend with a new threat: the Blasphemy Cartel–a gang of ruthless mystics consolidating control over New York's magical underworld. From targeting innocent magical refugees to resurrecting dead superhumans, the Cartel strikes with military-like precision.

But who are they? Where did they come from? And does it have anything to do with the hole in Wong's memory?

"THE BIG SPELL"

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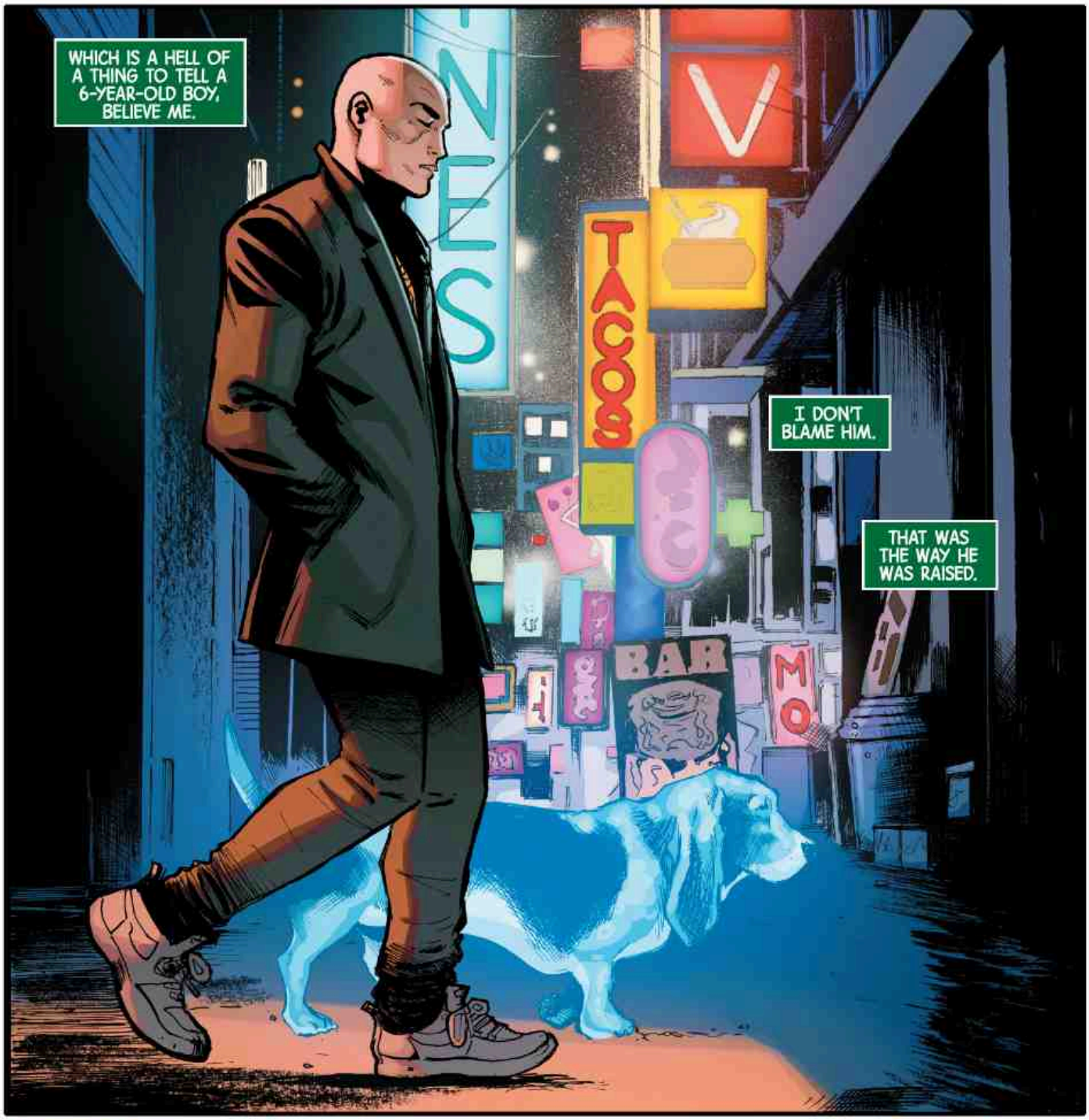
CHINATOWN,
NEW YORK CITY.
MY FATHER, WONG, WAS A HARD MAN.
HE HAD BEEN RAISED TO BE, THE SAME WAY HIS FATHER WAS.
THE SAME WAY HE RAISED ME.
MY NAME IS WONG. THE SAME AS MY FATHER AND HIS FATHER.
AND MEN NAMED WONG HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TOLD THIS BY THEIR FATHERS:
"THERE IS NO GREATER FAILURE FOR YOU THAN TO OUTLIVE YOUR SORCERER SUPREME.
"YOU WILL DIE BEFORE THEY DO. THAT IS YOUR DUTY.
"THEY ARE EVERYTHING. YOU--WE--ARE NOTHING."


WHICH IS A HELL OF A THING TO TELL A 6-YEAR-OLD BOY, BELIEVE ME.
I DON'T BLAME HIM.
THAT WAS THE WAY HE WAS RAISED.
TACOS
BAR

TO BELIEVE THAT IN THE FACE OF THE COSMIC IMPORTANCE OF THE SORCERER SUPREME, WHOMEVER THEY MIGHT BE THAT I MIGHT SERVE...
...HIS OWN SON'S LIFE HAD NO IMPORTANCE AT ALL.
AS HE HIMSELF FELT ABOUT HIS OWN LIFE IN COMPARISON TO THAT OF THE ONE HE SERVED.

MY FATHER GAVE ME MY LIFE'S PURPOSE WHEN I WAS JUST A BOY.
AND I HAVE MANAGED TO UTTERLY FAIL IN THE EXECUTION OF THAT DUTY.

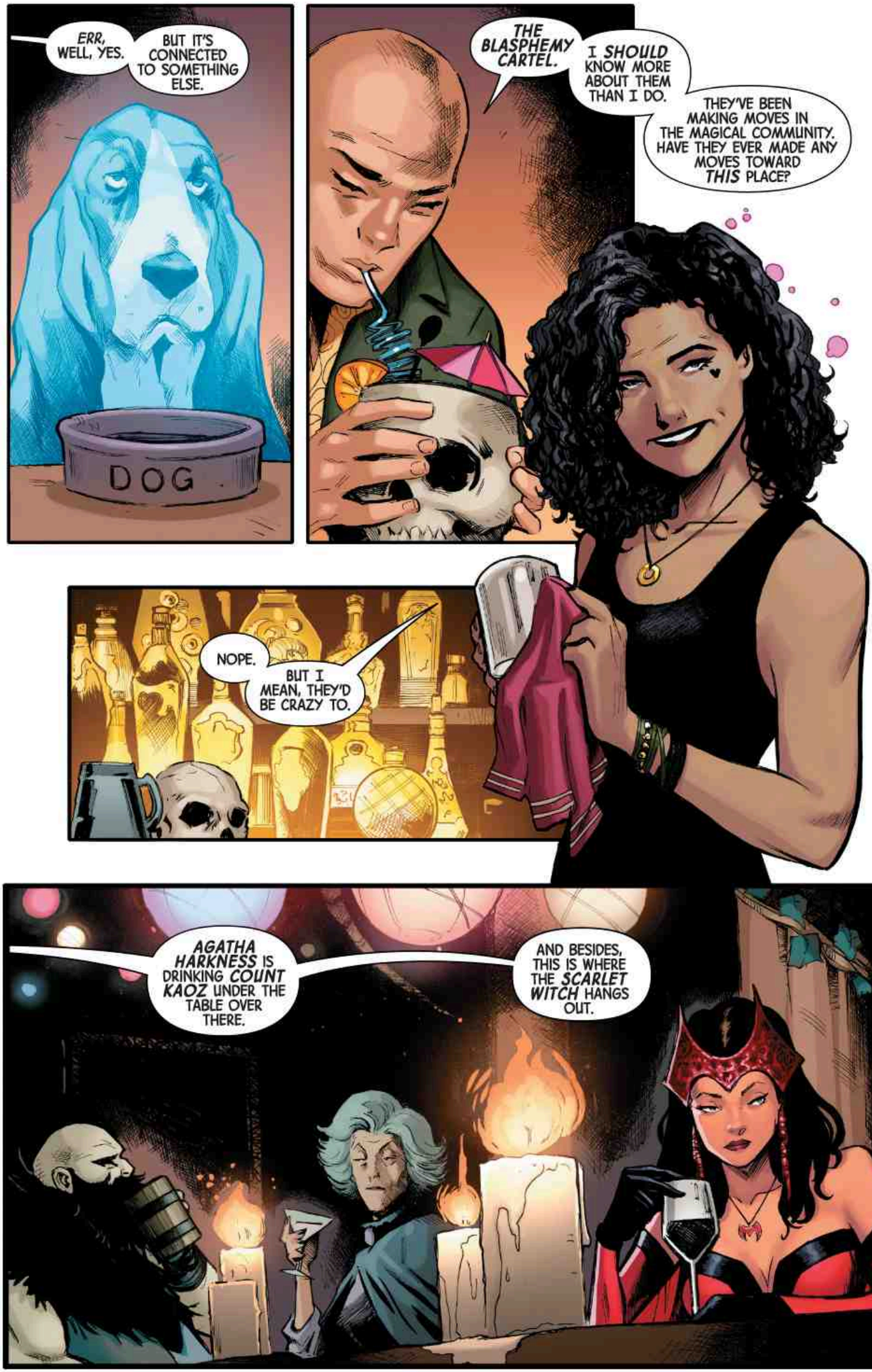
STEPHEN STRANGE, MY SORCERER SUPREME, IS DEAD.

AND I AM ALIVE STILL.

WHAT A LIFE.
ON THE HOUSE, HANDSOME.
THUD

HELLO, JENNY.
HEY YOURSELF, WONG. WHAT'S GOT YOU DOWN AT THE MOUTH?
FLICKERING JENNY IS THE BARTENDER AT THE BAR WITH NO DOORS.
SHE WAS CURSED BY A WITCH SOME YEARS AGO WITH A CONSTANTLY CHANGING APPEARANCE, WHICH HAS MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR HER TO HOLD DOWN WORK IN THE MUNDANE WORLD.
ASIDE FROM FAILING IN MY LIFE'S WORK?
NUMEROUS THINGS. I HAVE A HOLE IN MY MEMORY THAT I CANNOT ACCOUNT FOR, FOR ONE.

WOW, MISSING MEMORY AFTER A NIGHT AT THE BAR WITH NO DOORS? SHOCKING.

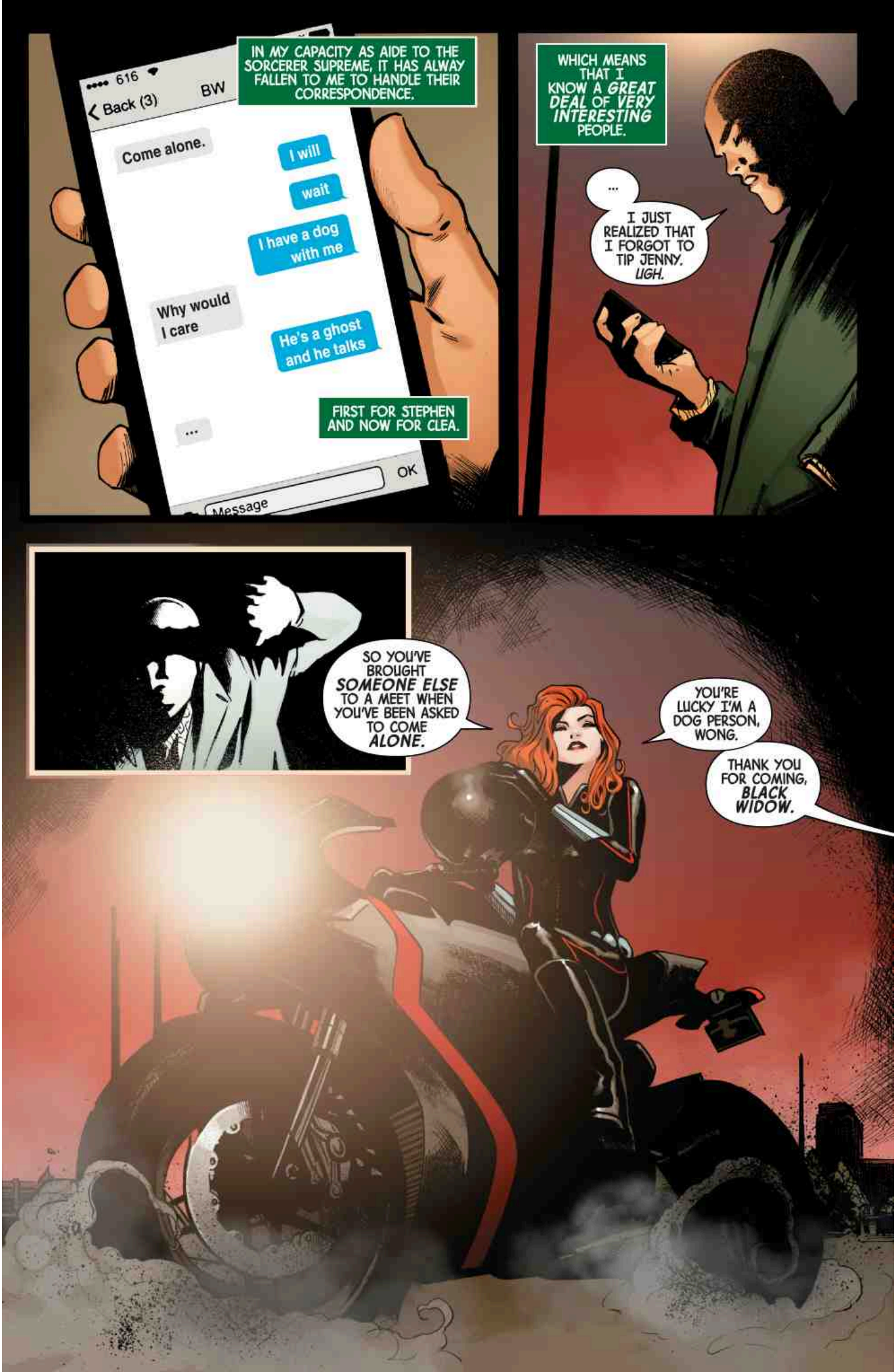

ERR, WELL, YES.
BUT IT'S CONNECTED TO SOMETHING ELSE.
DOG
THE BLASPHEMY CARTEL.
I SHOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT THEM THAN I DO.
THEY'VE BEEN MAKING MOVES IN THE MAGICAL COMMUNITY. HAVE THEY EVER MADE ANY MOVES TOWARD THIS PLACE?
NOPE.
BUT I MEAN, THEY'D BE CRAZY TO.
AGATHA HARKNESS IS DRINKING COUNT KAOZ UNDER THE TABLE OVER THERE.
AND BESIDES, THIS IS WHERE THE SCARLET WITCH HANGS OUT.

IF THERE'S ONE PLACE THE BLASPHEMY CARTEL WON'T SHOW THEIR FACES, IT'S THE *BAR WITH NO DOORS.*
HMM.
THEN I'LL HAVE TO KEEP LOOKING.
YOU WANT MY ADVICE, WONG?
IN MY CAPACITY AS BARTENDER-SLASH-THERAPIST?
PLEASE, BY ALL MEANS.
L O V E

IF I WERE YOU? I'D LET IT GO.
I'VE HUNG AROUND MAGICIANS LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT IF YOU GO PICKING AT THINGS THAT YOUR BRAIN TOLD YOU YOU SHOULDN'T KNOW, IT USUALLY GOES BADLY.

I CAN'T SAY THAT YOU'RE WRONG.
BUT I'VE LOST ONE STRANGE ALREADY.

AND I FEAR THAT IF I DO NOT GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS, I'LL LOSE *ANOTHER.*


IN MY CAPACITY AS AIDE TO THE SORCERER SUPREME, IT HAS ALWAY FALLEN TO ME TO HANDLE THEIR CORRESPONDENCE.
616
Back (3)
BW
Come alone.
I will
wait
I have a dog with me
Why would I care
He's a ghost and he talks
...
FIRST FOR STEPHEN AND NOW FOR CLEA.
Message
OK
WHICH MEANS THAT I KNOW A GREAT DEAL OF VERY INTERESTING PEOPLE.
...
I JUST REALIZED THAT I FORGOT TO TIP JENNY. UGH.
SO YOU'VE BROUGHT SOMEONE ELSE TO A MEET WHEN YOU'VE BEEN ASKED TO COME ALONE.
YOU'RE LUCKY I'M A DOG PERSON, WONG.
THANK YOU FOR COMING, BLACK WIDOW.

SO. MAGIC GANGSTERS.
WHO OPERATE WITH MILITARY TACTICS AND EQUIPMENT.
AND WHEN I THOUGHT OF THE ONE PERSON WHO KNEW EVERYTHING ABOUT MODERN MILITARY AND ESPIONAGE OPERATIONS--
--YOU THOUGHT OF ME. I'M FLATTERED.
LET ME SEE THE THING.
HMM.
IT'S NOT D.O.A.*, I CAN TELL YOU THAT MUCH. OR 666 COMMANDO, DEPARTMENT X'S KOSCHEI SQUAD OR ANY OF THE LIKE.
BUT TELLING YOU WHAT IT ISN'T IS NOT THE SAME THING AS TELLING YOU WHAT IT IS.
WHICH IS WHAT YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW.
YOU SAY THAT THEY'RE MAKING MOVES IN THE OCCULT UNDERGROUND?
YES.
MOVES FOR CONTROL.
*HYDRA'S DEPARTMENT OF OCCULT ARMAMENTS! --DS
COMPETITIVE CONTROL AREAS.
IT'S TEXTBOOK.
YOUR MAGICAL UNDERGROUND IS UNGOVERNED, OR MAYBE UNDER-GOVERNED WOULD BE A BETTER TERM--IT DOESN'T FALL UNDER THE CONTROL AND PROTECTION OF ANY STATE ACTOR.
SURE, MAYBE THEY GOVERN THEMSELVES, BUT WHEN A NON-STATE ACTOR WITH THE KIND OF RESOURCES THIS BLASPHEMY CARTEL HAS MOVES IN TO TAKE CONTROL, THEY'RE IN TROUBLE.
AFTER ALL, THE STATE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW THAT THEY EXIST. WHO ARE THEY GOING TO CALL FOR HELP?

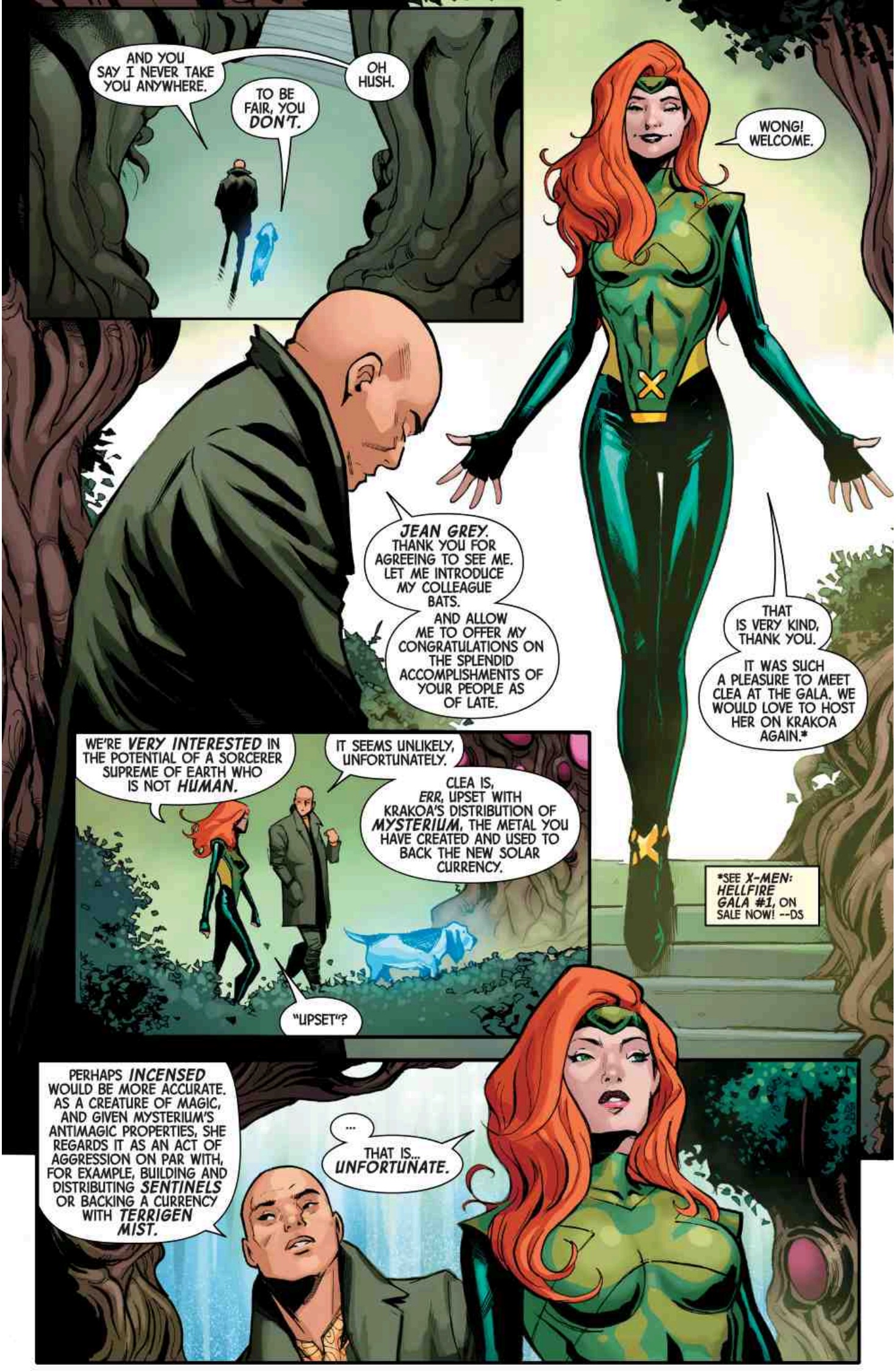
THE SORCERER SUPREME.
THAT'S WHO THEY CALL.
WHICH IS WHY YOU'RE AT WAR RIGHT NOW.
AND I'LL TELL YOU THIS FOR FREE--WHEN YOUR ENEMY KNOWS YOUR ADDRESS AND YOU DON'T KNOW THEIRS, THAT'S PRETTY BAD WAR FOOTING.
GOOD LUCK, WONG.
GIVE CLEA MY REGARDS.
VROOOOOOOOOOM
REALLY, BATS? YOU DON'T EVEN SAY HELLO?
SHE'S REALLY SCARY.
YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.
I DON'T THINK THAT WOULD STOP HER!
THE THING I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS THIS--
--HOW DID AN ORGANIZATION WITH SUCH RESOURCES ESCAPE OUR NOTICE FOR SO LONG?
I DON'T KNOW.
WHY IS IT JUST LATELY THAT WE'VE ENCOUNTERED THEM?
THAT'S A LOT OF QUESTIONS, PAL.

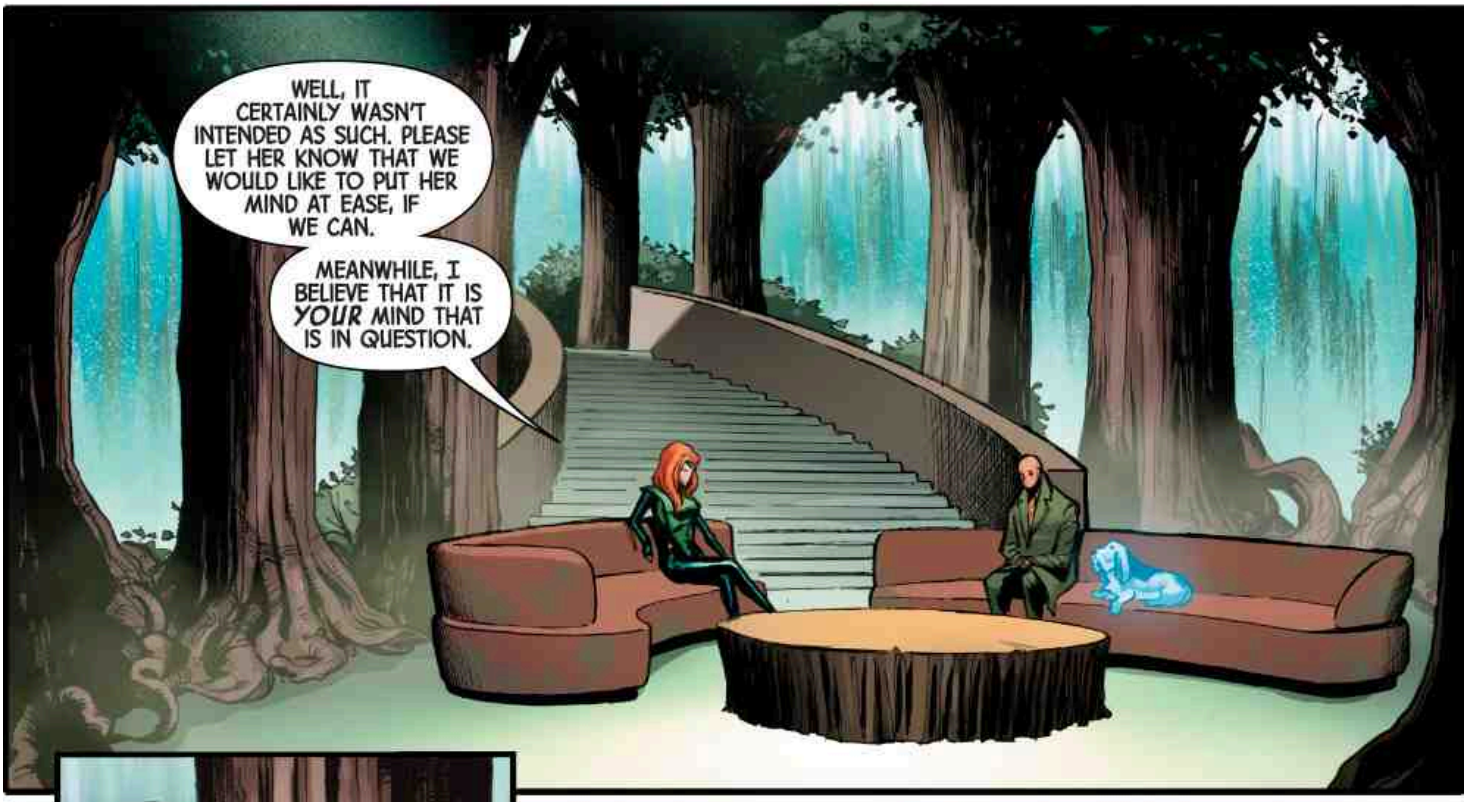
I THINK YOU'VE ASKED ENOUGH OF THOSE TONIGHT.
→SNIFF←
IN FACT, ME AND THE BOYS ARE HERE TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU DON'T ASK ANY MORE.
THE LOST BOYS.
GLITTERPUNK STREET GANGSTERS, HOPPED-UP ON PIXIE DUST AND READY FOR VIOLENCE.
NOT PROPERLY PART OF THE MAGICAL UNDERGROUND, MORE ACCURATELY DESCRIBED AS ADJACENT.
THAT IS A SHAME.
BECAUSE I AM FULL OF QUESTIONS.

THIS IS NOT WHAT I NORMALLY DO.
SUCH AS--
--HOW MANY OF YOU WILL WALK AWAY FROM THIS ENCOUNTER UNDER YOUR OWN POWER?
THE REPARTEE.
THE NAKED VIOLENCE.
HOW FEW TEETH WILL YOU HAVE LEFT BETWEEN YOU?
I HAVE ALWAYS PRIDED MYSELF ON MY SELF-CONTROL.
HOW MUCH PAIN CAN YOU TAKE?
THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR THIS.
EVEN WITHOUT UTTERING A SINGLE SPELL, THE LOST BOYS ARE NO MATCH FOR ME. NOT WITH THE TRAINING I'VE HAD MY ENTIRE LIFE.
WHY DID YOU THINK THIS WOULD GO ANY OTHER WAY?!
THIS IS ME GIVING IN TO MY OWN FRUSTRATION.
MY OWN RAGE. MY OWN PAIN.
RAAAAAGHH!
I BRUTALIZE THESE GANGSTERS BECAUSE I CAN'T PUNISH MYSELF FOR MY OWN FAILURES ANY MORE THAN I ALREADY HAVE.
RAAAGGHH!

I, OF COURSE, DO NOT FEEL ANY BETTER.
HEFF.
HEFF.
HEFF.
YOU, UH, WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?
NO, THANK YOU, BATS.
AND I APOLOGIZE. THAT IS NOT HOW I LIKE TO PRESENT MYSELF TO THE WORLD.
AWW, THAT'S OKAY.
BESIDES, THAT'S A HUMAN THING. DOGS KNOW THAT, SOMETIMES, WHEN YOU GOT A BEE IN YOUR BONNET?
YOU JUST GOTTA BITE SOMETHING.
WHERE TO NOW?
CENTRAL PARK, I THINK.
FIGURES. THE ONE TIME I GET YOU TO TAKE ME TO THE PARK AND IT'S ON BUSINESS.

WE CALL THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM HOME.
BUT IT IS NOT THE ONLY PLACE OF POWER IN NEW YORK CITY. THE PROUD *BAXTER BUILDING*, THE SHADOWY *MIDNIGHT MISSION*...
...AND THE *TREEHOUSE* OF THE *X-MEN*.


AND YOU SAY I NEVER TAKE YOU ANYWHERE.
TO BE FAIR, YOU DON'T.
OH HUSH.
WONG! WELCOME.
JEAN GREY. THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO SEE ME. LET ME INTRODUCE MY COLLEAGUE BATS.
AND ALLOW ME TO OFFER MY CONGRATULATIONS ON THE SPLENDID ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF YOUR PEOPLE AS OF LATE.
THAT IS VERY KIND, THANK YOU.
IT WAS SUCH A PLEASURE TO MEET CLEA AT THE GALA. WE WOULD LOVE TO HOST HER ON KRAKOA AGAIN.*
*SEE X-MEN: HELLFIRE GALA #1, ON SALE NOW! --DS
WE'RE VERY INTERESTED IN THE POTENTIAL OF A SORCERER SUPREME OF EARTH WHO IS NOT HUMAN.
IT SEEMS UNLIKELY, UNFORTUNATELY.
CLEA IS, ERR, UPSET WITH KRAKOA'S DISTRIBUTION OF MYSTERIUM, THE METAL YOU HAVE CREATED AND USED TO BACK THE NEW SOLAR CURRENCY.
"UPSET"?
PERHAPS INCENSED WOULD BE MORE ACCURATE. AS A CREATURE OF MAGIC, AND GIVEN MYSTERIUM'S ANTIMAGIC PROPERTIES, SHE REGARDS IT AS AN ACT OF AGGRESSION ON PAR WITH, FOR EXAMPLE, BUILDING AND DISTRIBUTING SENTINELS OR BACKING A CURRENCY WITH TERRIGEN MIST.
...
THAT IS... UNFORTUNATE.

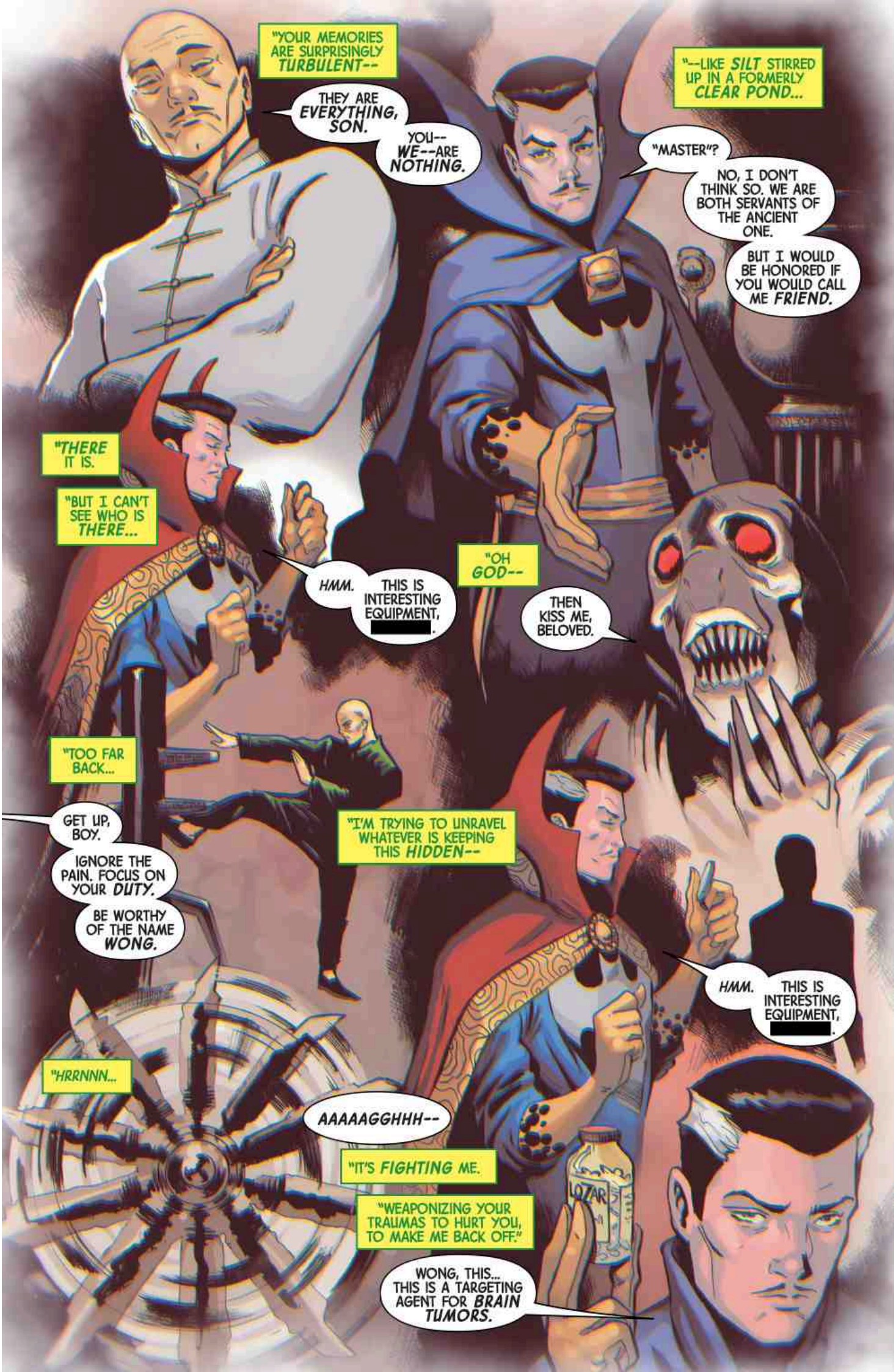

WELL, IT CERTAINLY WASN'T INTENDED AS SUCH. PLEASE LET HER KNOW THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO PUT HER MIND AT EASE, IF WE CAN.
MEANWHILE, I BELIEVE THAT IT IS *YOUR* MIND THAT IS IN QUESTION.

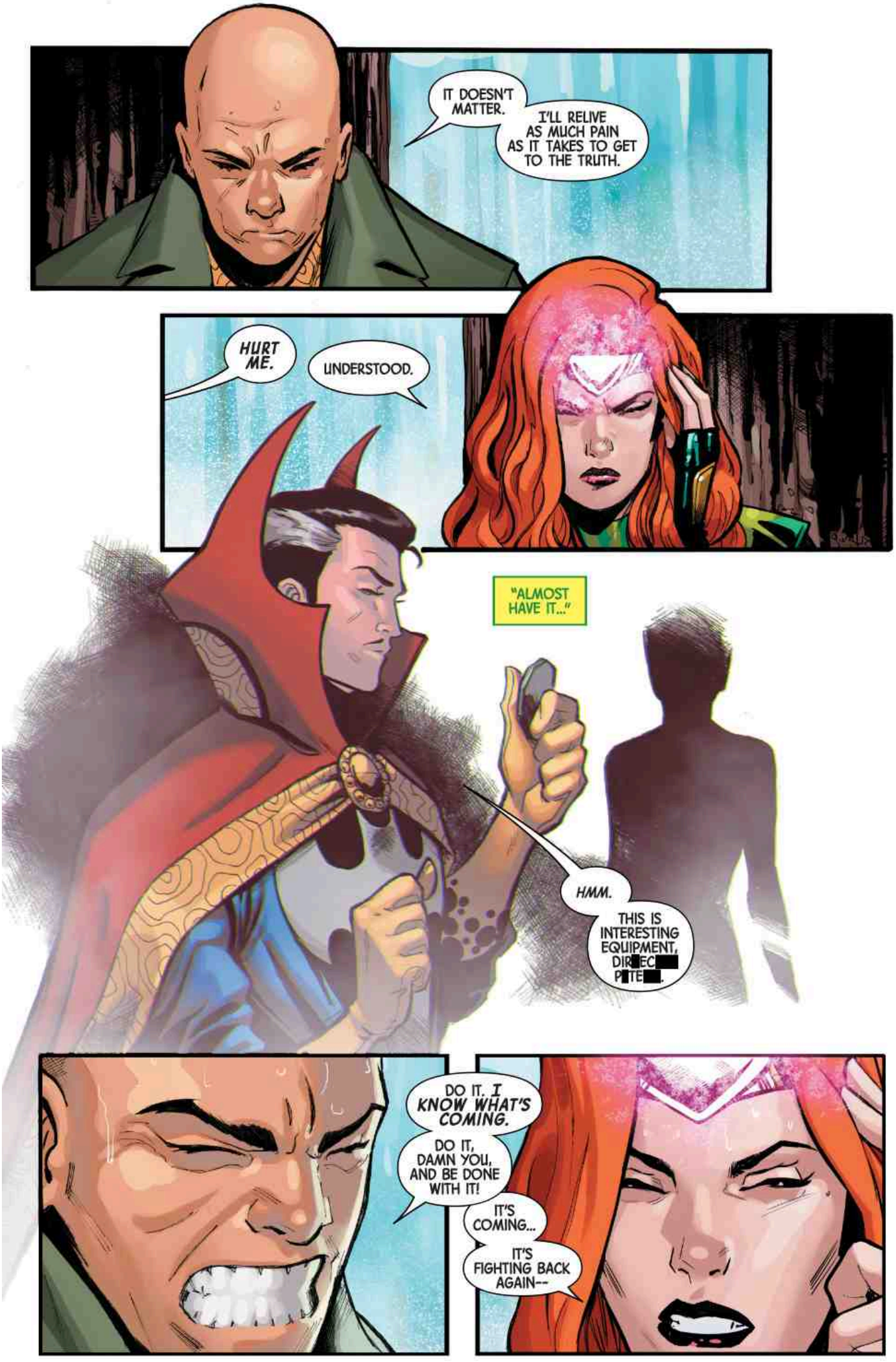
*EXTRAORDINARY X-MEN #8. --DS

FIGHTING SPELLS OF AMNESIA IS NOT MY SPECIALTY, BUT I'LL DO WHAT I CAN.

THIS MAY BE UNCOMFORTABLE.

BUT PLEASE DON'T BE EMBARRASSED-- I MAKE NO JUDGMENTS ON WHATEVER I MAY SEE.


"YOUR MEMORIES ARE SURPRISINGLY TURBULENT--
THEY ARE EVERYTHING, SON.
YOU-- WE--ARE NOTHING.
"--LIKE SILT STIRRED UP IN A FORMERLY CLEAR POND...
"MASTER"?
NO, I DON'T THINK SO. WE ARE BOTH SERVANTS OF THE ANCIENT ONE.
BUT I WOULD BE HONORED IF YOU WOULD CALL ME FRIEND.
"THERE IT IS.
"BUT I CAN'T SEE WHO IS THERE...
HMM. THIS IS INTERESTING EQUIPMENT, [redacted].
"OH GOD--
THEN KISS ME, BELOVED.
"TOO FAR BACK...
GET UP, BOY.
IGNORE THE PAIN. FOCUS ON YOUR DUTY.
BE WORTHY OF THE NAME WONG.
"I'M TRYING TO UNRAVEL WHATEVER IS KEEPING THIS HIDDEN--
HMM. THIS IS INTERESTING EQUIPMENT, [redacted].
"HRRNNN...
AAAAAGGHHH--
"IT'S FIGHTING ME.
"WEAPONIZING YOUR TRAUMAS TO HURT YOU, TO MAKE ME BACK OFF."
WONG, THIS... THIS IS A TARGETING AGENT FOR BRAIN TUMORS.
LAZAR


IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I'LL RELIVE AS MUCH PAIN AS IT TAKES TO GET TO THE TRUTH.
HURT ME.
UNDERSTOOD.
"ALMOST HAVE IT..."
HMM.
THIS IS INTERESTING EQUIPMENT, DIR[redacted] P[redacted].
DO IT. I KNOW WHAT'S COMING.
DO IT, DAMN YOU, AND BE DONE WITH IT!
IT'S COMING...
IT'S FIGHTING BACK AGAIN--

"OH, WONG.
"OH, WONG, I'M SO SORRY.
"I'M SO, SO SORRY.
STEPHEN!

"GOT IT!"
HMM.
THIS IS INTERESTING--
I SEE.
I SEE!
THE SPELL IS BROKEN--!
MY MEMORY HAS RETURNED!

I SEE WHO IT IS.

WONG! WONG!
ARE YOU OKAY?
I HAVE FACED MY DEMONS, BATS.
AND I HAVE COME AWAY WITH INFORMATION. COME, WE HAVE ONE MORE STOP TONIGHT.

MS. GREY.
DESPITE WHAT YOU HAVE SAID, I AM IN YOUR DEBT. ANYTHING YOU, THE X-MEN OR KRAKOA EVER REQUIRE OF ME, YOU HAVE BUT TO ASK.

BUT I HAVE ONE FURTHER FAVOR I REQUIRE...

"...I NEED TO BORROW SOMETHING."
JENNY.
REALIZED AFTER I LEFT THAT I HAD FORGOTTEN TO LEAVE A *TIP.*
HERE.
WONG?
LISTEN, I APPRECIATE IT, BUT--
WHAT THE HEL--?
MYSTERIUM, BORROWED FROM A FRIEND.
POWERFUL ANTIMAGIC. ENOUGH TO BREAK YOUR *GLAMOUR OF CONCEALMENT.*

TELL ME WHY, W.A.N.D. DIRECTOR PANDORA PETERS.
TELL ME WHY I COULDN'T REMEMBER YOU OR S.H.I.E.L.D.'S ENTIRE WIZARDRY ALCHEMY NECROMANCY DEPARTMENT.
TELL ME WHY YOU'RE HIDING AT THE BAR WITH NO DOORS.
TELL ME WHY THE BLASPHEMY CARTEL IS USING W.A.N.D. EQUIPMENT AND TACTICS.

YOU MEAN YOU HAVEN'T FIGURED IT ALL OUT YET, WONG?
AFTER THE SOVIET UNION FELL, THE K.G.B. BECAME GANGSTERS.
SAME THING HAPPENED WHEN S.H.I.E.L.D. FELL.

THE BLASPHEMY CARTEL IS W.A.N.D.
AND THEY WANT ME DEAD TOO.
NEXT: THE SORCERER SUPREME AND THE HARVESTMAN!

NEXT:

The Sorcerer Supreme Of Death!

Miracleman Variant by Alan Davis

Variant by Luciano Vecchio

Clea and Wong have uncovered who is behind the zombie resurrections of the deceased heroes and villains. But they're going to need all the help they can get, including from the Sorcerer Supreme of Death...the Harvestman!

EMAIL US AT MHEROES@MARVEL.COM AND MARK "OKAY TO PRINT"!

ZONE